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LESSONS FROM DAILY LIFE.

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BY

EMILY E. HILDRETH.

"Take, therefore, no thought for the morrow ; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." — MATT. vi. 34.

"Every hour that fleets so slowly
Has its task to do or bear ;
Luminous the crown, and holy,
If thou set each gem with care."



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TO

DR. JOHN CHEEVER,

MY FRIEND IN A TIME OF SPIRITUAL DARKNESS,

This Little Book

IS GRATEFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR ;

BELIEVING THAT THROUGH HIS HANDS IT MAY FIND ITS WAY
MOST SURELY TO THE HANDS AND
HEARTS OF OTHERS.

THE lessons of life can never be absolutely the same for any two individuals.

Each life has its own peculiar needs ; each requires its own peculiar development ; but all may unite in the acknowledgment that there is a God, and that He is our Father.

There are many who are convinced, in a general way, that the discipline of this life is permitted for our best good ; and many can say with the Psalmist, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray ; but now have I kept thy word." (Ps. cxix. 67.) Nevertheless, a gradual development of the spiritual nature is necessary, that the tender guidance of our Heavenly Father may become evident, even in the most trifling occurrences of daily life.

If this little book shall come to the notice of any who are seeking for the Truth, — perhaps wandering in the barren wilderness of doubt, — for such it is written. May the thoughts which here

find expression awaken in the reader better thoughts, and more earnest desires for “the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” (John i. 9.)

That *true Light* can come only through the Word of God revealed to man. The Bible is our only sure guide. Let us go to it with reverence, and with a childlike desire to learn what it teaches.

E. E. H.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., July, 1868.

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LESSONS FROM DAILY LIFE.

OUR LIFE IN THIS WORLD.

“Dum vivimus, vivamus.”

“‘Live while you live,’ the epicure would say,
And seize the pleasures of the present day;
‘Live while you live,’ the sacred preacher cries,
And give to God each moment as it flies.
Lord, in my views let both united be:
I live in pleasure when I live to thee.”

DODDRIDGE.

WE rise in the morning, eat and drink, and perform our daily work, joyfully sometimes, and sometimes with a burden at our heart. Joys and sorrows come to us all along the daily pathway; and then the night brings rest, and with sleep we die to all our former living, renewing our life, at each morning's resurrection, from the grave of the past.

We are young, and we grow old, and we are told that life's experience shall give us wisdom. Is this *all*? What does it profit? Are all the toils and sorrows, disappointments and trials, that come to us here, to lead us *only* to the wisdom of experience?

There is an old Chinese proverb, “The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man per-

fects without trials," which implies our need of regeneration. But in the daily discipline of life we may not always see just how the gem is to be polished, although we may feel the friction.

As we become more thoroughly conscious of our own need of "*a clean heart and a right spirit*," we shall accept more willingly the trials that come to us; recognizing in each one an opportunity given to turn from evil to the good, making them "steps up to heaven." Thus shall our life appear to us in a new aspect; for we shall see —

"A mighty end upspringing,
Like choice wheat amid the tares."

What is a trial or a sorrow? Is it not the feeling that comes to us when we are required to do or to submit to that which is not agreeable, something that we do not love? When we yield, the pain is gone; and from the agony of the petition, "*Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me*," we come at length to make the continual prayer of our heart, "*Not my will, but thine, be done*."

Although we may tacitly acknowledge that this outside life is not *all*, yet sometimes we seem to forget that which is within, and it is then that some reminder recalls us to the contemplation of our life in its true relations. Some life with which our own is mingled fades like a star from our earthly

horizon ; and as it disappears from our view, some message of truth — a ray of light from the spiritual world — is revealed to us. Some unexpected event causes us physical suffering. Some cherished hope is utterly destroyed, and we are left with nothing but trust. Is it not better so ?

We shall learn thus to listen continually for the teachings of that holy voice which says to each one of us, "*I will lead thee in the path of life*"; and when we are in doubt, His word shall be to us a reassurance : "*For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.*" (Deut. xxx. 11-14.)

The life of our Lord Jesus Christ has been given as the most perfect pattern for each one of us ; and as we accept it, and make it more entirely the test and measure of our own life, new revelations will bring to our perceptions something of the spiritual lessons which are translated into our earth-language by the words of the Bible ; and His Word shall become truly, "*A lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.*"

We may not, indeed, make our external life like

His in every respect, for different surroundings and circumstances, give to each life form and coloring which may not be disregarded. It is right to conform, in a general way, to the manners and customs of the people among whom our life is given us to live, as Jesus also lived in accordance with the customs of the Jews, although at the same time showing their errors. But we may follow Him in spirit, taking His words for our guide, making them a part of our daily life, and He shall lead us "*beside the still waters,*" and make us "*to lie down in green pastures.*"

THE VOICE OF THE LORD.

“But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.

“And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice.

“And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.” — JOHN X. 2-5.

THE voice of the Lord is His Truth; and as it is received by men, so is it heard by each one.

The voice of man is one of the means by which he manifests himself to others. The voice of the Lord is His manifestation of Himself to His creatures. It comes to each individual soul; feeble and hardly audible, if we turn ourselves away from it, but more distinct and clear as we listen, with a childlike spirit of obedience, to its divine teachings.

All truth that comes to us through the Word, or through the Works of the Lord, is His voice.

Sometimes, when we are in perplexity and doubt, His truth comes into our thought in the words which He has given us: “*I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.*” This is the voice of the Lord

to us. Then comes the question, *How* will He teach us in the way that we shall go? and, if we listen, the same voice shall answer to us, "*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.*" (John xiv. 21.)

To keep the commandments which He has given us,—to use the truth that has been revealed to us as the rule of our outward life,—is the only true way to listen to and obey God's voice. "*He that is of God heareth God's words.*" To be "of God," is to love to do His will, and not our own,—to "watch and pray" continually for strength to turn resolutely away from evil, in whatsoever way it may be presented, and strive to do the good. To "*cease to do evil, and learn to do well.*" (Is. i. 16.)

The words of our Lord to all His disciples, are, "Follow me"; and we do follow Him only as we make His life in this world the example and measure of our own, both spiritually and naturally. Spiritually, in the regeneration of all our affections and thoughts; and naturally, in the change of our external life as it proceeds from the internal.

As we become able to perceive more clearly that "*the kingdom of God is within,*" and that whenever and wherever we permit the Lord's love from within to lead us in our external life by "ob-

serving to do all " that He commands us, we shall also be able to understand better the voice of the Lord and its teachings, as they come to us continually.

In the progress of our regeneration, we must experience various changes. There must be days and nights, summers and winters, in our spiritual life as well as in our natural life; and, as we become more conscious of these changes in ourselves, we shall perceive that when we are in external states,—that is, when our thoughts are entirely occupied with external things,—it is then, spiritually, our night. We are then spiritually *asleep*. But when, turning from our external surroundings, our thoughts are directed to spiritual things, it is then spiritually our day. When the voice of the Lord comes to us in this state, we listen gladly to its teachings, and they are intelligible to us. But in the former condition His voice, if heard at all, is afar off, and not understood.

The misfortunes and calamities which come into our life here, generally find us in this external state; and, lamenting our own sorrow and suffering, we do not at once perceive the truth to which they will lead us; but, as it becomes evident, we shall acknowledge even these to be the voice of God.

When the voice of the Lord was made audible

to the people who were listening to the teachings of Jesus, it was heard in various ways. Some said, "It thundered"; others, "that an angel spake to Him"; but Jesus said, "*This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.*" To those who are giving their whole life to the things of this world, and allowing them to crush and destroy all the better things of their spiritual nature, the voice of the Lord comes like thunder, — heard because it is mighty, yet listened to from afar, and often forgotten when it is past. To others who are striving to become more spiritual, and yet, groping in the darkness of their unregenerate lives, are searching for the right way, it comes like the voice of an angel, to cheer and encourage. While to those who can receive, it is "the still, small voice," heard with clear though soft distinctness in the secret silence of the soul, speaking words of comfort and strength: "*Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God.*" (Is. xli. 10.)

This was the still, small voice which came to the prophet Elijah. The manifestation of the great Jehovah to the interior consciousness of man; more potent than the wind, the earthquake, or the fire; for "*when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering-in of the cave.*" (1 Kings xix. 13.)

The wind, the earthquake, and the fire are gross-

er, more material manifestations of the power of God; but God Himself is not in them as He is in "the still, small voice," audible only to the finer sensibilities of man's spiritual nature. This part of our nature needs more thorough development, in connection with the physical, that we may thus come into a suitable condition to hear all that our Lord shall say unto us.

Were all the organism and functions of our life brought into perfectly harmonious operation, as our Lord undoubtedly made them to be, His voice should thrill our whole being with delicious awe, and nothing would be more delightful to us than to follow wherever it might lead.

Let us pray, with a living prayer, that His kingdom may come, even thus, upon the earth.

TRUTH.

“Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” — JOHN xviii. 37.

PILATE asked, “What is truth?” and inquiring hearts, amid doubting and longing, echo the question continually.

“Show us the Truth, that we may believe,” is the frequent cry of the tired soul, when the pains and trials of our life here lead us to seek something beyond.

The longings which the things of earth cannot satisfy are a spiritual thirst, to be quenched only by the “Water of Life.” But in vain do we search in the world without for its refreshing streams, holding our empty cup to be filled by the creeds of men, while “*the river of water of life*” proceedeth only “*out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*” (Rev. xxii. 1.)

Our blessed Lord cautions us, “*If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*” (Matt. xxiv. 23, 24.)

We must not depend too confidently upon the experiences and teachings of others. The *best* can be but novices in the things that may be learned. "*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest,*" (Matt. xi. 28,) are the words of Jesus. Some may point, and some who are farther on may call and beckon, and we may listen and follow; but each one must meet the Christ in the path of his own life before he can sincerely say, "*My Lord and my God,*" acknowledging that He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

When Jesus asked the man whose sight He had restored, "*Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.*" (John ix. 35-37.)

In the secret meditations of quiet hours, does not this question and its answer sometimes come to all who are seeking the Truth? Does not our Lord come to us in every event of our lives, *talking with* us in living words? Is not this the way in which His Divine Providence surrounds and leads us to the Truth? And do we listen and understand?

We look out upon wonderful things in this world: mountains, almost ethereal in their blue veil of mist; mighty waters stretching far and wide, with

their never-ceasing surges; wooded lands, and grassy meadows, and the delicate flowers offering fragrant incense by the wayside. We behold in these things visible and tangible truths, because we know, and are sure, that they are,—that they really exist for us, and for all who live in this world.

Now these are natural truths of a very low order. Every human being with the power of natural sight may discern them; but when we try to look within, to perceive the things existing for our inner, spiritual life, we find ourselves blind. Long do we grope in the darkness; stumbling often, perhaps falling; distracted by the conflicting declarations of others, and wandering in the wilderness of doubt, before, in simple confidence, we kneel to pray, “*Lord, that I may receive my sight!*” (Luke xviii. 41.)

“*Ask, and it shall be given unto you.*”

Our spiritual sight is given to us as soon as we truly desire and ask it in the right way. Our spiritual eyes are opened to behold things that are not of this world. Our feelings and thoughts reveal to us something of ourselves before unknown. Our inner world becomes more real, and our joys and sorrows mean more to us than before.

And yet we can see but dimly while we remain in this world,—enough, perhaps, to help us to “*wait on the Lord,*” that He may renew our

strength, — enough to make us strong in our belief that He leadeth us continually. The change which comes to us, when, leaving our garments of flesh, we are free to behold clearly the spiritual things about us, can alone bring to our spiritual sight the indubitable proofs of unclouded vision.

The various things constantly presenting themselves within the circle of our life, must be either accepted or rejected; and we may perceive, by a little careful observation, that our understanding acts as mental sight, turning each mental subject, and placing it in a light which makes it intelligible to us. But it is our will, or desire for anything thus presented, that makes us grasp and claim it as our own.

All things may come to the cognizance of our understandings, as our eyes behold all things spread before them; but our reception and enjoyment of each depends upon our love and desire for them.

Whatsoever comes to us from the experience and thoughts of others that is in agreement with our own, we are very likely to call Truth.

Our early education has very much to do with our modes of thought, and with our reception of help from others, — more, perhaps, than we are accustomed to suppose. We come to years of maturity with a creed all formed, — a plan for life that appears to

us the only right one, — and, as we come in contact with those whose belief seems similar to ours, there is always an inclination to gain strength by union. Could we, however, look into the secret life of each one, an individuality of creeds would be revealed as the guide which, however modified by extraneous influence, gives direction to the whole life.

Thus we accept as truth whatsoever fits our own creed. We believe what we love to believe, whether we are willing to confess it or not. We need to look farther, — to learn that a vast difference may exist between what we, with our confidence of knowledge, may call truth, and the pure essence of Divine Truth itself.

Truth is our Lord Himself in His purity! The manifestations of His infinite love for *all*! The arms of His love are forever stretched out for our protection, but it is the perception of His eternal truth that makes us feel their tender, fatherly clasp, and helps us to trust all our life under “the shadow of His wings.”

Truth is our Lord’s revelation of Himself to man, the light of Heaven, the shining brightness of the spiritual Sun, sending its life-giving rays through all the spiritual world, and penetrating even to the darkness of this earth-life.

As man *receives* God’s truth, so shall it be to him, — a light shining through the shades of night,

a lamp to his feet, a guide for all his way, or, by his own perversion, the blackness of darkness. For in the face of our Lord, revealing, to all who will receive, the light of His countenance, is only, to us, the appearance of wrath, when evil makes us turn away from the lessons of His truth. And thus forever must it be, that, "*with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.*" (Ps. xviii. 26.)

God's truth is infinite, eternal, unchangeable. A single ray of its brightness comes to the feeble vision of man; and, dazzled by its glory, the revelation is deemed entire. Accepting, perhaps with reverence, but often with much pride, the glimmers of Truth which a life's experience prepares them to receive, men consider themselves ready to behold the Glory of God in all His wonderful manifestations, and cry to others, "Behold, behold! This is the Truth!"

We may believe without sight; but that only can be real *living* Truth to each individual which becomes so by its application to his own peculiar wants and needs, although the Divine Truth of God may never be measured by man's capacity to receive it.

God's Truth is like a sea, boundless, unfathomable. We take only drops from its immensity, yet, in our childish ignorance, compare the drop with the ocean.

Let it be our continual effort to make ourselves ready that we may know the Truth when it comes to us, and, receiving it gladly, seek the best ways of showing it to others. That this may come to pass, error must be renounced as soon as seen, the love of self entirely subjected, and our own power to do held in constant distrust, except as we become conscious that we receive all from our Lord.

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John viii. 32.)

REGENERATION.

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” — JOHN iii. 3.

THE whole life of our Lord in this world was a perfect pattern for the regenerating life of every human soul; though the advancement of each individual must be limited by the development of his individual capacity in the reception of truth.

Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, went to Jesus by night, seeking instruction; and Jesus said to him, “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” When Nicodemus doubted and questioned concerning this, Jesus answered: “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*” (John iii. 5–8.) And yet Nicodemus questioned, “*How can these things be?*”

Amid the doubts which make night in our spiritual life, we should, like Nicodemus, go to the feet of Jesus, with sincere desires to be taught by Him alone. To Him should we bring our questionings, with confident assurance that He will not despise to answer them all, although we, too often, like the ruler of the Jews, can at first behold nothing of the Divine Truth veiled for our reception in the corresponding forms of this outside life ; and the living answers that come to us in the pathway of our daily life seem only commonplace.

A babe is born weak, helpless, ignorant ; but it breathes the air, it lives the life, of this world, and, under the tender, loving care of those to whom its life is intrusted, it grows out of this helplessness and ignorance. Physical necessities are first to be supplied, and at first they seem the *only* necessities of life ; but there comes a time when other needs make themselves manifest, — needs for mental development, the necessities for the life of the spirit, spiritual food, clothing, and shelter ; and, as these are abundantly or scantily furnished, so must the whole life be influenced.

Jesus tells us that the birth of man into this world is like his regeneration, — the birth into that condition, the necessities of which must be supplied by spiritual things. This birth from natural to spiritual life must come to every man before he

can “*see the kingdom of God.*” Every soul must have its birth, infancy, and childhood for the commencement of its growth; and its advancement must be gradual, step by step,—the continuance of each state being limited by its progress.

There are those in this world who do not come even to the first of these conditions. Their life, confined wholly to external things, is comparatively not life, but death. They are not “born again,” and cannot therefore live in the “kingdom of God,” any more than the embryo can live in this world before its birth. There is in all the possibility of such life; but, unless this possibility becomes an actuality, it must die.

“*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*”

There are others who are “born again,” who give some attention to spiritual things, yet do not advance spiritually to “the stature of a man,” but remain, like infants or children, always dependent upon others for spiritual support. But, with the deepest sense of humiliation, and walking with unsandaled feet, man may forever approach the Infinite, receiving at each step new revelations of the Divine Love and Wisdom. The first step of the heavenly way may be consciously taken, or education may lead us so gradually in the right direction that the exact time of any permanent

change in our life may remain unknown to us, but it can be none the less necessary or positive. Regeneration cannot be accomplished by a single act. It is a slow and laborious process, of which there must be a beginning; but a regeneration implies a total change of qualities which are at first implanted in our natures. This cannot be at once accomplished.

The words of the Lord, given by Moses to the children of Israel, were, "*The Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee, by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee. But the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed.*" (Deut. vii. 22, 23.)

Is there not a lesson here for us? Are there not nations of evil against which we are fighting? Are we not sometimes discouraged because our progress in conquering them seems so slow? Let us not forget that it must be done "by little and little." Let us not forget that it is the Lord our God who is to accomplish this by His almighty power, and not we ourselves. If we will work with Him, evil shall be driven from our lives, and good shall come to take its place as fast as we can receive it. This is the work of a lifetime, and this is regeneration.

“PERFECTED THROUGH SUFFERING.”

“He leads us on
By paths we did not know;
Upward He leads us, though our steps be slow,
Though oft we faint and falter on the way,
Though storms and darkness oft obscure the day;
Yet, when the clouds are gone,
We know He leads us on.”

WHY is it that trial and sorrow and suffering come in some form to every one, whatever may be his condition in life? If God is love, as we are taught, why should not man, His noblest work, be happy, as the recipient of His love? What is the cause of the misery and distress everywhere existing among men? And why is our life in this world so filled with tribulation and vexation as to be proverbially called “*a life of sorrows?*”

Such questions as these often present themselves to the thought, even of those who are living the life of regeneration; and, as we advance in that life, we shall be better able to answer them satisfactorily for ourselves and for others.

Our Lord is love. Listen to the words that He speaks to all who will hear. “*He maketh his sun*

to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt. v. 45.)

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you." (Is. lix. 1, 2.)

That it is easy to do wrong, and hard to do right, no one will deny. To "cease to do evil, and learn to do well," comprises the whole of man's regeneration.

As we come into more interior states, we may become conscious of the various and continuous states through which we are led spiritually, corresponding with the changes which are apparent in this world, of cold and heat, day and night; and then we may be able to perceive something of the spiritual meaning conveyed by the words, "*While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease.*" (Gen. viii. 22.) The earth signifies the external part of the soul of man; and the changes in this are similar to those changes in the outer world which seem to affect the outside life alone.

When we are in states of doubt and temptation, it is dark and cold to us spiritually, because we turn ourselves away from the Lord, as the earth

turns away from the sun ; and in such states we think that the Lord is displeased with us, and sometimes that He has forgotten us ; but if we remember, that, "*with the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward,*" (Ps. xviii. 26,) we shall perceive that the changes are all in ourselves, and not in the Lord ; for He has said, "*I am the Lord ; I change not.*" (Mal. iii. 6.) The Lord would make *all* His children happy. The cause of our unhappiness is in ourselves. Our love of evil makes us cling to it, even when our understanding of truth teaches us that it is wrong.

All the trials and difficulties that come to us here are only opportunities given for the relinquishment of some evil love, that we may receive in its place the love of good. The stronger our love for the evil, the more intense must be our suffering in putting it away from us. This is laying down our life ; but the words of the Lord are, "*He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*" (Matt. x. 39.)

When it is required to relinquish something for which we have an affection, the good that will come to us in consequence is not often evident at the time ; but when we are able to consider more interiorly all the events of this life, we shall perceive how each has been a stepping-stone to a higher and better state.

Let us trust, therefore, with childlike confidence in the Divine Providence ; rejoicing that we may be made perfect, even through suffering, and knowing that “we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities,” (Heb. iv. 15,) for “*he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.*” (Is. liii. 3.) Our Lord lived the life that we live, and suffered as we suffer, and infinitely more than we can suffer or imagine of suffering. His Human Nature was, for our sakes, “perfected through suffering,” and made Divine. May we not, shall we not always, receive consolation and strength from this knowledge, even though we *walk in the valley of the shadow of death?*

OUR HELPERS.

“The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” — PSALM xxxiv. 7.

HOWEVER self-reliant we may become, there are times in the life of each one, when the help of others is desired and needed. Although self-reliance is one of the lessons of life which we need to learn, yet we may not, and ought not, to live entirely independently of others.

Each one who lives to a life of maturity in this world must find for himself an answer to the questions which will always present themselves to every inquiring mind: What is it to live? Why do I live? And what shall my life be? But it is chiefly by the help of others that the answer is made legible to us, as we fill the leaves of our “book of life.” It is our connection with others that brings to us our most important lessons.

It very often appears to us, in the peculiar circumstances of each life, that those who should be the helpers are the only hinderers. Those who are united by the nearest and dearest ties of earth seem often, to our external vision, just the opposite of helpers to each other. When we find ourselves

in such conditions with regard to those connected with us in the duties and relations of this life, we are apt to feel that some other position would be preferable, and more conducive to our spiritual development. If these dead weights could only be removed, it seems to us that we should come at once into the delight of our being, and also into a more desirable way of living. Dissatisfied and miserable, we bemoan our lot, picturing to ourselves how much better it *might be*,—thus wasting our powers, instead of using them to the best advantage. But let us examine this subject from a different point of view,—from the interior perceptions of the mind, instead of from the exterior vision of outward things.

If we notice carefully those to whom we most readily apply for help in times of need, we may observe that they are generally those who have thoughts and desires similar to our own. If we are in trouble of any kind, we are more inclined to apply for aid to one who has experienced suffering of the same kind than to one who knows nothing of it. “Like seeks like” is a common saying. The wise enjoy the society of the wise; while the ignorant feel more at ease with the ignorant. The pure delight in the presence of the pure; and the evil, in that of the evil.

There are few, probably, who will not acknowl-

edge to themselves, if not to others, that their lives are susceptible of improvement. None who are striving to live a true life ever attain the perfection of their standard. However receptive of the Lord's love and wisdom we may become, however much we may delight to make them the standard of our life, their perfection we can never reach. Each mountain-top, attained through valleys of self-renunciation and humility, only reveals to our vision higher summits beyond; and thus shall there ever be something better and higher than the present, to invite us onward and upward.

We need to pray that we mistake not the glittering peaks of self-love and self-gratification for the sun-illumined summits of heaven; and in the unfolding of our spiritual natures we may come to perceive and understand something of the meaning contained in the words, "*Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.*" (Is. ix. 7.)

Those who are most similar to ourselves are not always able to give us the most effectual help in the constant changes of our life which are necessary for its regeneration, although we turn to such in its most important crises. For, viewing our life from the same position, as it were, which we ourselves occupy, it may easily be seen that the influence of these will tend rather to keep us where we are

than to urge us to alter our ways of living, as those who differ from us do continually. Thus are our *real helpers* very often those who seem to us otherwise. While we feel but the present pain, our Lord knows the end.

When we commence a life of regeneration, striving to become better day by day, all others who are thus striving become our helpers, in a certain sense, whenever we may, in any way, come in contact with them, as fellow-travellers make the way seem easier and less tedious. But we must not forget that even those who are going in an opposite direction can help us too by the contrast which they present.

Those who are about us, however, in our life here, are not our only, nor our most competent helpers. Our Lord has provided others for us.

The mention of our Guardian Angels, especially those of little children, is not an unusual thing; yet it is often pervaded with an air of mysticism and doubt, that makes them appear to us incomprehensible beings, and their presence is rarely acknowledged except in some of the most important events of our lives. But by the Word of God we are told that "*the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.*" (Ps. xxxiv. 7.) And this is not occasional, but continual, *always*; and as we learn what it is "to fear Him," fearing to do the evil which would

turn us away from Him, we may become conscious of those who are present with us spiritually, offering their help, which we are at liberty to accept or to refuse, for we are left in freedom. We may also feel sure of our Lord's providential care in this. "*For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways,*" (Ps. xci. 11,) is a divine promise.

But evil influences, as well as good ones, come to us from within. Martin Luther's contests with the spirits of evil were no vain imaginations, although a nature less noble than his could not, under similar circumstances, have received power to cope with them. Through him a nation was to be set at liberty from the shackles of vain delusions. Influences of evil which for centuries had been gaining power, through a tacit reception, by the people, of false doctrines, were to be met and repulsed. God gave the power to a poor monk, through his firm determination to know the Truth, and to do the Right, that he might accomplish this great work; and, with the birth into a state of greater spiritual freedom, angelic helpers were permitted a nearer approach to men, making their influence felt throughout the world by ministries of love.

The effect of this important change became visible in the works of the Reformation, extending with power through all succeeding ages. But, like

all other great changes relating to the character and life of men in this world, the work was first spiritual, and then, through human mediums, became natural. Calvin, Luther, Melancthon, — all great moral reformers, whose names are handed down from generation to generation, — have been such mediums. Each by his inner conflicts and victories helping the world to take one step nearer to the central Truth.

In later times, when the spiritual freedom of man was again threatened by the power of evil, gaining access by means of the false teachings rife in the world, the Lord prepared another man to work for Him. The mission of Swedenborg was to oppose existing errors, and, by revealing the existence of a spiritual meaning within the literal words of the Bible, to give to man a firmer foothold in spiritual things. For this purpose he was permitted, while yet in the flesh, to behold with the eyes of his spirit the wonderful things of the Spiritual World, and many of the spiritual beings associated with man in all his life. The people of coming ages shall speak his name with reverence, for the Truth revealed from God through him. His writings are voluminous, and well known to many. In regard to the presence of spiritual companions with man, he says: "There are with every man two spirits from hell, and two angels from

heaven, by whom is effected communication with both, and who thus also cause man to be in freedom. The reason why there are two is because there are two kinds of spirits in hell, and two kinds of angels in heaven, to whom correspond the two faculties in man, namely, the will and the understanding." (*Arcana Cœlestia*, 5976.)

"The Lord places man in an equilibrium between evil and good, and between falses and truths, through evil spirits on the one hand, and through angels on the other, in order that man may be in freedom." (*Arcana Cœlestia*, 5982.)

There is in our life here abundant opportunity for each one to satisfy himself of the truth of this, if the attempt be made in a right spirit and from a pure motive.

A careful examination of our thoughts and feelings, our constantly varying life within, will reveal to us our real selves. We may see that sometimes we are in a joyous, happy mood, desiring to bless all about us with deeds of love flowing out from the wealth of our gladness; and sometimes we are sad and distrustful, when the real or fancied troubles of our own lives close around us like a dark cloud, and with their magnified expansion shut us selfishly within our own hearts, gloomily blind and deaf to all the opportunities given us for doing good. Then, in common parlance, we have the "blues."

There are many passages of the Bible referring to physical diseases as the outward effect of evil influences exerted spiritually from within.

We are told in the sixteenth chapter of the first book of Samuel, that "*Saul was troubled by an evil spirit,*" which made him say and do things that we should be likely to attribute to a diseased condition. And in the last verse of the chapter we read: "*And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand; so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.*" It was evidently the evil spirit that caused his sickness; and, when it departed, *he was well.*

Many vexed with devils were brought to Jesus, and by casting out the devils—who were real spiritual beings, speaking and acting through the bodies of men—He healed those who were suffering.

Has mankind essentially changed since then? May not our pains and maladies, physical and mental, be the result of evil influences manifested in this way, as well as those of olden time?

God's laws in relation to both spiritual and physical life are universal and eternal. Careful investigation may assure us that physical or mental disorder of any kind permits the approach of evil

spirits, who are ever watching for an opportunity ; while, on the other hand, their approach causes and increases the disorder.

Their influence is felt through the thoughts and feelings of evil which they bring to us ; and these, if allowed to remain, will make us diabolical like themselves. Their intense and burning desire to do this may be known by the difficulty which we experience in any effort to turn away from them. They are tenacious when admittance is once granted, and, if we would be saved from the power of their influence, our only sure refuge is the Lord. If we turn to Him in "the time of trouble," we may know from our own experience the truth of His words, "*When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.*" (Is. lix. 19.)

The common complaint of irritability and peevishness among invalids may be traced to this cause. But when we can say, with firm confidence, "*Behold, God is my salvation ; I will trust, and not be afraid ; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song,*" (Is. xii. 2,) the influence of evil spirits can have no power over us. We are then delivered from their oppression. Yet, strange as it may seem, we suffer long before coming willingly to this condition. When physicians learn to search for the spiritual causes of disease, its physical man-

ifestations will be much more surely under their power to control.

The departure of evil spirits, which takes place only by our own consent and desire, is always a signal for the return of angels, who never leave us unless compelled to do so by our own choice of evil. Good and evil cannot remain together. Either, being in power, excludes the other for the time, and we ourselves may choose which it shall be. It was *after* the devil left Jesus, that angels came and ministered unto Him.

The presence of angels may become perceptible to us by the good and gentle feelings, and true and pure thoughts, which come to us from their heavenly influence; and while we make them welcome guests, striving to keep our houses in order, barring the entrance against evil, *watching* and *praying* lest we enter into temptation, they will remain our earnest and powerful helpers in our search for truth and in our growth in goodness.

Visions of spiritual beings have been at various times permitted to persons in this world, that their existence might not be utterly denied. In these later days, also, when the life in this world has become so all-engrossing that men and women seem to forget that there is any "life beyond" for which they should prepare, the startling demonstrations of Spiritism induce many to acknowledge the existence of the spiritual world and its proximity to this.

Open intercourse, however, between the two worlds—between men in the world of spirit and men in the world of matter—is shown to be injurious, both by the declaration of those who were “taught of God,” and by the deleterious effects which follow such intercourse in the present day.

Jesus said to Thomas, “*Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*” (John xx. 29.)

They who are made the witnesses of such convincing proofs are, in a measure, *compelled* to believe, like Thomas, when our Lord showed to him His hands and His side. But this is a kind of blind belief, entertained only because of the impossibility of further doubt.

“*A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.*” (Matt. xvi. 4.)

The Word of God has been given unto us; and whenever we accept it as the guide and rule of our life, humbly and reverently searching in it for the signs which shall satisfy our questionings, confidently believing it to be a means of communication between God and man, revelations of Truth will come to us, as we are able to receive them. We may then know, from our own experience, how it is that they *are blessed, who have not seen, and yet have believed.*

We may, at such times, feel the presence and assistance of angelic helpers so surely that we can say, "It is enough"; wishing for no further sign, either visible or audible. Feeling assured of the constant power influencing our lives through spiritual associations, we may come to a knowledge of the importance of choosing carefully the good, and refusing the evil with firmness and vigilance.

It is not only in the greatest trials of our life that we especially need the aid of our angel helpers. In our every-day life it is just as necessary. The petty annoyances and vexations that come to us daily are so many opportunities given in which we may choose or refuse the help which they always offer.

The first emotion felt, when anything troubles us, is often one of impatience, or even of anger. This is through the influence of evil spirits, as is also the desire to yield to it; and whenever we *do* yield, their nearer approach fills us with hateful thoughts and feelings like their own. The angels, however, whose departure must take place at the near approach of evil, never leave without some suggestion of good, although it may be unheeded.

How often is an angry or impatient word checked by some sudden thought of its error! Or perhaps the remembrance of some words of the Bible flashes to our minds, and the harsh feeling is subdued.

This is through the influence of our angel helpers ; and we have only to choose it, that it may be always ours.

The suggestions of evil come first, or perhaps it may be more correct to say that they are first consciously perceived, because there is generally something in us which favors them. When we turn willingly from them, they are gradually withdrawn.

We are, therefore, never entirely alone, although it may often seem otherwise to us ; for companions invisible to our external sight are always present, and they are also of our own choice, although we may be ignorant of this. We may become conscious of their presence, as we are sometimes conscious of the presence of another person in the darkness, without the proofs of external sight or sound.

Spirit and matter, the two essential elements uniting to form the life of every human creature, are equally necessary to each other, although seldom, if ever, equally developed. They whose character and thoughts serve only the material part of their nature may not discern the things of the spirit, or be at all able to understand the experiences of those who *do* see. But are they any the less real to the trusting ones, whose eyes are opened, through humble efforts to do the *right*? The

words of Jesus may still explain the difference: “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. . . . The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*” (John iii. 6 – 8.)

The apostle Paul, with a keen perception of these things, wrote to the church at Corinth: “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. ii. 12 – 14.)

While we remain in our dwellings of flesh, let us try to remember continually that these are only temporary, and that our life in this world is only a preparation for another life in a permanent home, which shall be good and beautiful, or evil and miserable, just as we build it from our life here. Although spirits of evil may present themselves to us in the garb of goodness, we should pray to our Father in heaven, that He will discover to us their

deceit, and assist us to choose for our helpers only such as will aid us in the best manner to discern and accept the good and the true, and to reject the evil and the false, that our way may be upward and onward forever.

TEMPTATIONS.

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." — MATT. vi. 13.

THEY who have endured spiritual temptations, which assail when the evil desires of the heart urge, from within, to yield to some external gratification which is known to be wrong, know the anxiety, distress, even despair, attendant upon them. They also know that such states of feeling should be attributed to the presence and influence of evil spirits, who endeavor, with the most malignant and deceitful arts, to bind all in their servitude.

Merely external men cannot experience spiritual temptations; for with such the affections and thoughts are so entirely engrossed with sensual things, that they are not conscious of the influences about them, and make no opposition to evil, except so far as they are prevented from yielding to it by external restraints.

That man is born with tendencies to evil of every kind may become evident to any one who, by the light of Divine Truth, faithfully examines the motives of his own life. Evil influences could

exert no power over us, if there were within us no love for the evil ; and this is what we have to contend with. Evil does not originate with us, but we make it our own, by its acceptance, when presented through the influence of others.

While the love of evil, in any particular form, is permitted to remain quiescent, we may be ignorant of its existence in ourselves ; but when, by external circumstances, that affection for evil is excited, evil spirits, filled with a corresponding desire, find easy access to us ; and, by their near approach, communicate their own burning lusts and false reasonings in such a manner that we believe them our own.

Of ourselves, we have not the least power to resist their insidious arts ; and, were it not for goods and truths from the Lord, brought to our thought by angels, we should yield to evil without a struggle.

The Lord has *all* power in heaven and upon earth. While He made Himself visible in this world, those who were possessed with devils went to Him, and He healed them. We also may go to Him, and, casting ourselves at His feet in all humility, have full assurance that He will deliver us from all our spiritual enemies. And, though they rend us sorely, we shall still be able to say, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

When Jesus was tempted of the devil, He answered *only* with passages from the Word; and so may we, following His divine example, make His truth our *shield and buckler*. He had “fasted forty days and forty nights, and was an hungered,” (Matt. iv. 2,) when the tempter came to Him. When we are in spiritual need, we should be especially vigilant, remembering His admonition, “*Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.*” (Mark xiv. 38.) For in such conditions we are especially liable to mistake evil for good.

States of temptation correspond with the “six days of labor” in external life; and they are necessary, that we may become able to enjoy the Sabbath of rest, into which all may come, after conflicts with evil. The command, “*Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work,*” should be as carefully obeyed as the requirement to rest on the seventh day. A better understanding of the spiritual meaning conveyed by this command will help us to perceive how it is that states of spiritual conflict and rest are typified by outward labor and rest.

In these states of conflict, the evil tendencies of our human nature are often shown to us in such a manner that we are appalled by the revelation, and shrink from the acknowledgment of its truth. Then, in the humility of utter self-abasement may we find our only strength in the prayer of the pub-

lican, "*God be merciful to me a sinner.*" (Luke xviii. 13.)

Our Lord Himself endured, in the flesh of His Humanity, all temptations that can possibly come to man, although, in the literal description of them, they are comprised under a few general heads. It may be seen, in a very general way, that the temptation, "*If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread,*" (Matt. iv. 3,) included all possible temptations that may induce man to place dependence for spiritual nourishment and strength anywhere but on the one Infinite Lord, whose Divine command is, "*Thou shalt have none other gods before me.*" (Deut. v. 7.) And so do His other temptations comprise, in their spiritual sense, *all* to which man can be subject. For thus did He obtain all power *in earth*, as *in heaven*. By enduring and overcoming *all* temptations, could He alone obtain power to approach and aid man in similar conditions. Shall we doubt His ability and readiness to "deliver us from evil," whenever we will receive the assistance which He offers?

Evil must be seen and acknowledged before it can be removed; but the love of our Father surrounds us as a protection, even in our despair. We have only to acknowledge our entire dependence upon Him, to *ask*, and we shall receive strength for all our need.

“For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.”

(Is. xxv. 4.)

R E S T .

“And the land had rest forty years.” — JUDGES v. 31

WHEN the Israelites were led by Moses out of Egypt, they did not come at once to the land of Canaan. Their wanderings in the wilderness, and their struggles with enemies on every side, were long and wearisome, although they were continually advancing toward the “promised land.”

Their warfare, however, was not without cessation. After a long contest with some particular foe, the victory was gained because the Lord was on their side; and we are told, that “*the land had rest forty years*” (Judges v. 31); and yet “*they remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side, — but did evil in the sight of the Lord, and forgot the Lord their God.*”

The history of the children of Israel is a representative of the inner life of each individual man, who, by regeneration, comes spiritually to the land of Canaan, which is that state or condition of life in which love to the Lord and charity for our neighbor is the supreme and ruling motive. But

this work of regeneration cannot be accomplished at once, or by a single effort.

All are, at first, in the state to which the land of Egypt corresponds,—a state in which the affections and thoughts are engrossed by the things relating to external life,—scientific and sensual things. Jesus was carried down into the land of Egypt at a very early period of His life in this world, that this might represent the natural tendency of all men to come at first into such a state, regarding the things of outward life as all-important. But He was afterwards brought into Galilee, and “*dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was declared by the prophets, that He should be called a Nazarene,*” (Matt. ii. 23,) thus representing an advancement to a more spiritual condition of life.

Although by an acknowledgment of Divine Truth we may be led out of this external condition to follow more carefully the Divine teachings, yet it is only very gradually that we come into a more interior life. Evils and falses, our spiritual enemies, rise up in our way, and must be conquered, that we may advance.

The warfare of the Israelites was both offensive and defensive; and so is our spiritual warfare. When evil tendencies are made manifest to us, which are at once acknowledged as wrong, we

may, trusting in the strength of the Lord, attack and conquer them. Often, however, evil assails us like the host of an enemy coming upon us stealthily in darkness; and before we can be led to acknowledge it wrong, we may be overwhelmed by its power. But even then is the Lord our defence, "*we shall not be greatly moved,*" (Ps. lxii. 2,) for He will surely deliver us from the hand of all our enemies. And after each conflict we shall have seasons of rest, as "*the land had rest forty years.*" (Judges iii. 11.)

After Jesus had been tempted by the devil, "*angels came and ministered unto him,*" and we may become conscious of the presence of angels with us by the peaceful feeling of quietness and rest that comes to us after the turmoil of conflict.

The serenity of these states is not easily disturbed by the perplexities of external circumstances which may surround us. Our trust in the Divine Providence is strengthened, and our charity for others enlarged. The joy of heaven, the love of doing good, seems to thrill our whole being with delight, and we wonder that we should ever yield to doubt and despair. But angelic influences are not always consciously perceptible to us, although they are never withdrawn except as we reject them. We *forget the Lord our God, and do evil in his sight,*

when we relapse into former states of selfishness ; and of such conditions Jesus said, "*No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*" (Luke ix. 62.) Other influences then come to us by our own invitation, which make us unhappy and miserable.

Thus through the toils and dangers of our journey through the wilderness are we cheered by seasons of rest, and again disturbed and discouraged by the power of our enemies ; but it is written for our comfort, "*Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee ; in whose heart are the ways of them ; who, passing through the valley of Baca, make it a well : the rain also filleth the pools. They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*" (Ps. lxxxiv. 5-7.)

PATIENCE.

"I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry." — PSALM xl. 1.

OUR life in this world, and all the various circumstances connected with it, are a series of opportunities arranged for us by the Divine Providence of the Lord, and given with the tenderest love as the best assistance for each one in the life of regeneration.

Our severest trials are those in which we are required to relinquish something to which our affection clings tenaciously; and, the more unwillingly this is done, the more must we suffer. Then comes the question, Why is it so?

Our Lord in His infinite mercy would give to all His children greater blessings than they know how to desire for themselves. He would help us, in the very best manner, to reject every love for evil, that we may receive goodness and truth from Him, and thus grow into His "image and likeness." Were every desire, however, immediately gratified, all efforts for a higher condition of life would cease, and we should remain satisfied in ourselves without advancement. But

“He leadeth” each one “in the paths of righteousness.”

We learn, as children, among the first maxims, that “Order is Heaven’s first law”; and as we observe more interiorly the way in which the Lord performs all His works, we shall acknowledge that it is always according to His own established laws of order. We shall perceive, also, that all permanent changes come by gradual growth into them; and, keeping these things in our thought, it will be easier for us to have patience with ourselves and with others.

Great sorrows and trials require strength and fortitude, and an unwavering trust in the Divine Providence of our Lord; but the petty persecutions of daily life require *patience*.

Our Lord Jesus tells His disciples of the trials that shall come to them: “*And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls.*” (Luke xxi. 16–19.)

The persecutions here alluded to, although not literally fulfilled to each individual disciple, are nevertheless an external representation of the spiritual persecutions which assail every regenerating

soul. No sooner is the work of reformation commenced, than the evil desires and false thoughts favored by our perverted nature arise to oppose our progress, and we learn that "*a man's foes are they of his own household.*" (Matt. x. 36.)

In those states which we come into, when, in our troubles and vexations, we cannot "hope for better things," when the darkness of night gathers about us spiritually, if we strive to possess our souls in patience, trusting that the Lord will, in ways unknown to us, accomplish all that is right, patiently waiting for the morning, we shall not wait in vain. For, even before the light of morning, there will come to our spiritual vision, like a Star in the East, a perception of the more interior states of life into which these trials shall lead us; and the star shall go before us as a guide, until we come to the contemplation of the life of our Lord, comparing our own lives with His as our perfect standard.

His life in this world was the most perfect pattern of patience and gentleness. Although taunted and spit upon, jeered and scoffed at by the vilest men, He answered not, and prayed that they might be forgiven. Do we follow His example, remembering His words? — "*The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of*

the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?" (Matt. x. 24, 25.)

When Jesus explained to His disciples the parable of the sower, which He had given to the people, He said, "*That on the good ground are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*" (Luke viii. 15.) Although we may receive the truth gladly, when presented, temptation often comes to us when we are least watchful; and, neglecting to "bring forth fruit with patience," we give ourselves cause for bitter self-reproaches. Every failure, however, shall be an earnest of future success, if it only discovers to us some evil tendency which should be relinquished, that by true repentance we may make each one a stepping-stone, instead of a stumbling-block, in the life's journey.

"*In your patience possess ye your souls.*" (Luke xxi. 19.)

G R O W T H .

Growth is not a sudden transition from one condition to another, but a gradual development of interior principles in outward manifestations

WHEN we plant our flower-seeds in the spring, we do not look in one day for the green leaves which shall arise from them ; nor do we expect to see a blossom as soon as the tiny blade appears above the ground. We have learned something of the laws that govern these things, and know that the best thing for us to do, having sown the seed in a suitable place, is to wait patiently, assured that it will spring up in due time. The farmer plants his corn, and, although carefully watchful of its progress, leaves it to busy himself with other things, knowing that he must wait until the harvest-time for the crop which he expects.

We do not expect, or wish, to see little children with the stature and demeanor of men and women, because we know that physical growth and development require years of patient care and culture. As we come to understand more fully the laws that govern all material growth, we shall be better able to perceive the laws of spiritual growth, which are

as their soul; and lessons will come to us in our daily life, teaching us to wait more patiently for the things we may desire.

When *the good seed*, which is the Word of God, is sown, we are not always willing to give it time to grow. We look to see it spring up immediately, and are disappointed. Sometimes, in our eagerness to know its progress, like little children, we dig it up, to see if it is growing.

We know for ourselves, that when truth comes to us, it is not immediately made manifest in our life, although we may receive it gladly. As it first comes to our reception, it is concealed from external vision, and remains for a while hidden, like seed planted in the ground; but, like seed, it grows; and if we remember our Lord's words, "*Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit,*" (John xii. 24,) we may perceive how "the corn of wheat" is a representative of the truth which is received into our lives, and made good by living it, and how the growth of one corresponds with that of the other, — "*First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear.*" (Mark iv. 28.)

When our Lord came into this world, He did not at once assume the glorified Humanity which was necessary for the salvation of men; but, commencing at the very beginning of human life, as a

little infant, with undeveloped faculties, He gradually perfected His human nature, by successive changes, according to His own laws of growth, and, entering in with His Divinity, made it all divine. Into every regenerating life our Lord is born, and with its growth advances more and more to the stature of perfect Divine Man. The God that we first consciously worship does not, to us, appear the same after years of discipline and growth, although it is with difficulty that we can realize this change to be only the result of our own growth. His life comes down to earth continually, keeping pace with the growth of each individual soul, drawing it upward and onward; for His words are, "*I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me.*" (John xii. 32.)

Thus is He ever with us. And as we grow to the need and the better understanding of His words, they come to us with new life and power, that, following His example, we may receive them, not only into our thought, but into our lives also.

When first we attend to the teaching of our Lord, how often are brought to our notice the words, "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" (John iii. 3.) And, as we learn to listen, other words come to us, amid our daily toils,—words of comfort and encouragement,—"*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" (Matt. xi. 28.)

In all our intercourse with others, His gentle admonitions are ever given: "*Judge not, that ye be not judged*" (Matt. vii. 1); "*Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven*" (Luke vi. 37); "*All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*" (Matt. vii. 12). And although the suggestions of evil in our own natures would turn us from Him, even repeating, with the burning hatred of old, the cruel cry, "Crucify him!" yet "*for all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still,*" (Isa. v. 25,) offering to us the aid of His almighty strength, which we have only to accept by turning ourselves continually away from evil. Thus only can we grow in the right way, and come into more interior states of life, in which the words of our Lord shall come to us, revealing lessons of spiritual truth before unknown.

"*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, — even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.*" (John xiv. 16, 17.)

LEARNING AND TEACHING.

“And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all.” — PAUL, THE APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST.

EVERY one who gives any thought to the subject probably acknowledges to himself that he is a scholar in the great school of the World; that in living he is learning, and that in learning the daily lessons of life he is making progress. But that we are all teachers, as well as scholars, may not be as easily seen or acknowledged.

In the creation and preparation of man for a life of spiritual capacity, the first visible operation is the formation of a physical body; and several years of life are generally devoted to learning lessons which tend to its development. Then follows a period in which the intellectual powers and abilities are more especially cultivated and developed by means of books (which are only the crystallized thoughts of others), and the help of those who are farther advanced. After this there comes for each one that discipline which is called the “labor of life,” — those tasks that lead us to use, in our daily life, the lessons of truth previously learned.

Those who aim for nothing higher than physical development seldom make much progress in intellectual knowledge ; and those who remain satisfied with the accumulation of knowledge, simply for the sake of knowing, do not make much effort to use it.

All who belong to these two classes develop only the lower parts of their nature, covering, concealing, and smothering the spiritual life within, preventing its healthy development by allowing the outside, external life to crush it. To such the lessons of life are disappointment and sorrow, labor and vexation ; while to those who really and earnestly commence a work of regeneration in their development, all the lessons of life have a deeper meaning, bringing with them the conviction that the evil to be condemned and shunned is in themselves.

These, passing through the two former conditions, come to the third, — making the one aim of life to use for the benefit of others all knowledge previously obtained. With those in the former conditions the pursuits and pleasures of this earthly life are all-important, and the life within is disregarded and often forgotten ; while to those who come to the latter condition, the inner life of the spirit is all-important, and the outer life is only its manifestation. Thus is there accomplished in us a

fulfilment of the words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ, "*Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.*" (Matt. xix. 30.)

Much has been said and written of human influence, and all may know from experience the power of other lives over their own, and the lessons learned from them. We do *not* always, however, think what lesson is conveyed to others by our own lives. As each one lives his own life, and no two are, or ever can be, the same, each may learn from all, and may in his turn be a teacher for all with whom he comes in contact, displaying to every observer the regenerating effects of goodness or the corruption of evil. None are so humble, none so far removed from others, that there is no part for them in this important work.

If teaching be a part of our daily labor, it is certainly for our advantage, as well as for the benefit of those who learn, that we endeavor to learn and use the best ways of communicating to others the knowledge we may possess.

Our dress, our language, even our manner of walking, declare to an observant eye more truthfully our real selves than we are accustomed to acknowledge; and, as we become more fully conscious of this, we should endeavor to make our outer life more truly an exponent of the spiritual life within, "watching and praying" continually, that

good may conquer our evil propensities; and although, because of our human nature, we shall sometimes fall, we may at least keep our "lights burning" by seeking help and strength from our Lord. Forgetting to do this, and trusting in our own strength, we can do nothing.

We may learn the best ways of teaching others by noticing how the Lord teaches us, and by following His methods of teaching. His truth is presented to us in various ways: in His works, which are the manifestation of His divine life; in His Word, which is the manifestation of His divine wisdom, and in the manifestations of His divine love as they come to us through others; yet we are left in perfect freedom to receive or to reject the precious lessons, as we will.

The happiness and satisfaction of life attending the observance of God's commandments is simply the consequence always following obedience; and the unhappiness and misery attending a life of sin is not punishment inflicted by an offended God, but the consequence of disregard and disobedience.

It may sometimes appear strange to us that evil men should be allowed to carry out their designs and gratify their desires, while those who are earnestly striving for goodness are so often overwhelmed with disappointments and sorrow; but if we remember that the Lord is constantly leading each one of

His creatures towards the highest happiness of which he is capable, and teaching him with lessons best suited for his reception, we may become able to understand how, to the heart hardened by sin, external troubles would bring only feelings of resentment and anger, — thus making its condition worse, rather than better, — and how mercifully our Heavenly Father sends affliction and sorrow to those *only* who will be made better by it. “*Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.*” (Ps. cvii. 43.) Let us remember the admonition given in the thirty-seventh Psalm: “*Fret not thyself because of evil-doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.*” (Verses 1, 2, 3.)

We are allowed to do our own way, not, however, without reminders of something better, until by the suffering which follows the wrong we are led to seek some other way; and, if we seek with true humility, the words of our Lord are always verified, “*He that seeketh findeth.*” (Matt. vii. 8.) Thus are we left in freedom to accept or to refuse, while the Lord’s influence for good is never withdrawn from us, although we may persistently turn away and choose evil.

By careful consideration of these things, we may receive much valuable instruction in regard to the best methods of teaching others ; and however difficult it may appear to us to make use of it in our daily life, we may at least make an effort to turn in the right direction, remembering the words spoken by Him who “spake as never man spake,” “*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*” (John xiii. 17.)

CLOUDS.

“Earth is but the shadow of heaven, and things therein
Each to each other like, more than on earth is thought.”

THE beautiful, dreamy clouds, floating over our heads, in their various forms of beauty, — what lesson can we learn from them for our spiritual life?

The place of clouds is between the earth and its heavens, hovering, in ever-varying size and shape, above our heads, below the vast expanse of blue, apparently so far away, — sometimes rolling their milky thunder-heads in fleecy masses above the hills in the horizon, sometimes floating like a silvery veil transparent for “the glory beyond,” and sometimes covering the whole sky with a leaden hue, shutting from us the sunlight and our joy.

In the midst, between our outer and inner life, the spiritual clouds are our thoughts, coming and going, coming and going, sometimes in confused masses, sometimes in single distinctness, sometimes covering all our mental sky with darkness, but remaining only so long as we permit them. When we look up to our heaven within, they come floating between, giving to it their form and coloring;

and even when we look up to our Lord, whose throne is in heaven, we often find it difficult to keep them entirely away.

In those conditions of our spiritual life to which the bright and sunny days here correspond, our thoughts, like the clouds, are translucent, and shining with the light of truth from the Lord, our spiritual Sun; and when there come to us revelations of His divine love and wisdom, they are, in our thought, like the clouds of morning and evening, crimson with the warm love of goodness, and golden with the wisdom of truth. But when we neglect to "watch and pray" continually, thus yielding to the influence of evil, our thoughts are like those dark clouds which bring storm and tempest, wrapping us in a gloom that shuts out the light of heaven, although we know that the sun is always shining beyond.

We talk of "the cloudy days in life," and all may know that those conditions are referred to, in which gloomy and despondent thoughts, induced apparently by outward circumstances, but really by the suggestion of evil within, close, like clouds, over our heaven, obscuring all our mental vision of God's providence and tender love and care; and sometimes we seem shut in by them to despair. But if there be in our heart any love for the Lord, *any* desire to do His will, His tender mercy always

finds some way to reach it, and rouse it from its lethargy. Words of sympathy and kindness, a book, or the influence of one who has learned, by lessons of sorrow, how best to assist others, may help us to turn, and look up to the Lord, believing that He, as the Sun of Righteousness, still shines beyond the clouds; and we never look thus in vain. His blessed rays illumine our darkness, and our thoughts are made radiant by the light of His divine truth. The holy words of His revelation come to us with new power, revealing to our perception something of their "hidden treasure"; and as our thought is filled with their comforting assurances of truth, we can say, with some perception of its meaning, and wondering at our former obscurity, "*The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.*" (Ps. cxix. 130.)

Rain descends from the clouds, reminding us of the blessing that often comes to us through good and pure thoughts, refreshing and strengthening all our life, while the influence of evil thoughts is like the torrents and floods that destroy.

When, by resisting and putting away evil from our thoughts and life, we come into states of humility and trust in the Lord's divine providence, His word shall become, for each one of us, "a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night," by its manifestation in our thought; and the truth, in the

spiritual sense, will be like the sunlight shining through the clouds, — glorious, though veiled. And then may we see “*the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory*” (Matt. xxiv. 30) ; for it is in the clouds of our own thoughts that we receive Him ; and thus He becomes manifest to us by our reception of Him.

As our lives become more fully regenerated, our thoughts will be more constantly formed to the words given us in the Bible, — God’s Word, — the external covering of Divine Truth ; and, what is remarkable, each one may find in them something suited to every occasion of daily life, whatsoever it may be. Thus may they become the clouds of our heaven. In every aspiration of our life, the blessed words will come to us, as the best expression for our thought, “*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits*” (Ps. ciii. 2) ; and when the self-consciousness of our spiritual possessions would make us proud, we may put away the feeling with the thought, “*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake.*” (Ps. cxv. 1.)

MONEY.

“He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true [riches]?” — LUKE xvi. 10, 11.

WE cannot live in this world without money, or its representative; for by means of it we obtain all the necessities and all the luxuries of life. The desire for it stimulates us in our daily labors, and the want of it is the cause of much suffering.

For our spiritual life, we must have truth. We cannot live without it, or some representative of it; and all that we receive into our understandings, as our own, may serve us as money, by means of which we may obtain more.

The children of Israel, whose history is given in the Bible, were a representative people; and all the rites and ceremonies of their worship were representative, because they could not rightly use the truth itself, had it been revealed to them. Many are even now in a similar condition, sunk to such degradation, by yielding to the evil inclinations of their nature, that they would use even God's truth for their own selfish purposes, and, changing it, would

make it a lie. Truth in its purity is, therefore, kept from them, with the tenderest mercy, and they have only such representatives of it as they can receive.

Our Lord teaches in the Parable of the Talents (Matt. xxv. 14–30) how we should use the truth intrusted to us: “*For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.*” (ver. 29.)

For money we must labor; that which comes to us without our own exertion is never so truly *our own*; and for truth we must labor also. Although freely offered to all who will receive it, truth cannot abide in, or even enter, the soul that is filled with evil in thought and desire; but the removal of evil gives entrance to truth, and this is our spiritual labor and its recompense. In this way may we *sell all that we have*, as our Lord commands us, relinquishing the evils which belong to ourselves, and receiving, in their place, God’s truth.

Gold and silver, of which money is made, are the most valuable metals found, and are external representatives of Goodness and Truth, — the things most valuable for our spiritual life.

Truths, heaped together in the memory for the gratification of our pride in much knowledge are like money accumulated with a miserly spirit, — of

no use, either to ourselves or to others ; but truth employed to make our lives more useful to others is like money that is acquired, and used with a spirit of benevolence.

Jesus made an example of the poor woman who cast two mites into the treasury, because "*she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living,*" while the rich "*did cast in of their abundance.*" (Mark xii. 44.)

We must learn to acknowledge, that not only a *part*, but *all*, the truth we may receive, comes from the Lord ; and if we truly desire to use it *all* in His service, He will teach us the way to do so ; and we shall desire to use our material riches in a corresponding way. We should cast them *all* into the treasury, not by giving all the money we possess to the church, or for charity, but by endeavoring to use them always as means of making our lives more useful to others. Thus shall we become prepared to receive the true riches, which shall be "*without money and without price.*" (Isa. lv. 1.)

P R A Y E R .

“Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is.” — MARK xiii. 33.

“**W**ATCH and pray.”

These were the words spoken by the Lord Jesus to His disciples; and through all the long years that have come and gone between then and now have the words been preserved, and to each one of us do they come as a Divine command; for “*what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.*” (Mark xii. 37.)

Then He was making Himself visible, in an outward form, to the external sight of men, and His teachings were given in audible words. His disciples were those who acknowledged Him to be “*of God and from God,*” who listened with gladness to His teachings while He declared Himself to be a manifestation of Jehovah God, and *one with the Father*, and who afterwards suffered severe persecutions, many of them even death, enduring all for His name’s sake.

Now He is not visible to our outward vision, nor are His teachings given in the same manner as they then were; but His disciples are still those who

acknowledge Him their Lord, and listen eagerly for His teachings as they come to them in another way.

We are living in a time when the light of God's truth is beginning to make bright the dark places of the earth, not naturally alone, but spiritually. How many are singing, with joyful hearts,

“The morning light is breaking,
The darkness disappears.”

The old customs and institutions which have fettered the freedom of man as a spiritual being are gradually passing away, and new ones are taking their places.

Our Lord comes to us as truly to-day as He did to His disciples long ago; but His coming is spiritual, instead of natural. We see its wonderful effects in the changes and improvements of the world about us; but only those who are conscious of His presence spiritually in the temple of their own souls, and on the earth of their own lives, can understand and perceive *how* He comes, and makes “all things new.”

We need not pray to Him as a God afar off, for His presence is here, even in our midst.

While we live the life of this world, we are spiritually like those who sleep: our spiritual eyes are closed; our spiritual ears are dull of hearing; and this outer world, with its all-engrossing life,

seems to us the only reality that can exist. The few who are led, through an interior consciousness of something higher, to seek and find, are either misunderstood, or their descriptions of heavenly things are listened to as in a dream ; but the words of the Psalm are, “ *I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness* ” (xvii. 15) ; and we need not wait until our earthly covering is laid aside for this awakening.

Just as soon as we really and earnestly commence the work of regeneration in ourselves ; just as soon as we really begin to “ watch and pray,” to refuse the evil and choose the good, because our Lord commands us, do we begin to awake from our spiritual sleep ; and as we learn to become more carefully and constantly obedient to His commands in all our life, we shall know, each for ourselves, the meaning concealed in the words, “ *For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.* ” (Isa. lxiv. 4.)

But what is it to “ watch and pray ” ? How can we leave our daily labors to obey the command ?

Jesus said, in the parable, “ *He that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word ; and the care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches*

choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." (Matt. xiii. 22.) We need to learn to "watch and pray" *in* our daily labor, not *out of it*. Vain petitions, offered at stated periods, are not really prayer. If we ask impossibilities, we shall be disappointed. We must learn to *live* our prayers.

"*Whatsoever things ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive, and ye shall have them,*" (Mark xi. 24,) are the words of our Lord to us; but when we ask things which in our inmost soul we cannot believe that we shall receive, we are not complying with the conditions of the promise. When our belief that "*with God all things are possible*" (Matt. xix. 26) causes us to pray for the gratification of our desires and wishes in regard to our present life, asking Him to do what our own reason, if rightly heeded, declares to be impossible, when submitted to the laws according to which He always performs His works, we cannot truly believe that we shall receive such things, and we *cannot* receive them.

The poor little negro child may pray God to make his skin white, and doubt if his prayer is heard because his desire is not granted. We smile at his simple ignorance; but do not we, with equal ignorance, sometimes pray to be saved from suffering, forgetting that it is only the consequence of something wrong in ourselves, to which our atten-

tion should be directed? When calamities threaten, we pray to God to avert them, forgetting, in our fear, that "all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans viii. 28.) "*Deliver us from evil,*" we pray, and forget or neglect to turn from the evil, when temptation puts it in our way.

If we pray to God afar off, we may find it laborious and difficult; but as we become able to perceive, as well as to acknowledge, that He is in us and about us spiritually now and here, that "in Him we live and move, and have our being," (Acts xvii. 28,) "*Our Father, who art in the heavens,*" will be to us the only true way of addressing Him.

In the closet of our own souls, concealed from the gaze of those about us, may we constantly commune with Him, even in the midst of our toils and cares; and the earnest desire of the heart, that we may *follow Him* in all our life, will be a continual prayer.

True prayer is the sincere and earnest desire of the heart that God's will may become our will in all our life; and, whatever may be our external surroundings or condition, the words of this prayer will be, "*Not what I will, but what thou wilt.*" Such prayer is always answered; and, as we learn more about the ways in which the Lord always

works, we may also learn to ask only those things which will be for our spiritual welfare, and these will be possible.

Every inquiring heart repeats the question, "*Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*" (Micah vi. 6, 7.) And the answer is always ready: "*He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*" (ver. 8.)

When the disciples of our Lord asked to be taught how to pray, He gave them a form of words which is infinitely perfect for the expression of all human needs. Nothing can be desired, in a spirit of obedience to the Lord's will, which is not included in these divinely given words; and, as our life becomes more interior, we shall feel less desire to add to them any expressions of our own, seeking, rather, to bring all the thoughts and desires of our hearts into agreement with the spirit of their petitions.

The simple words, "Our Father," will help us to feel the immediate and constant presence of the

Lord ; and whenever, amid our wayward wanderings, we turn ourselves spiritually to Him, the utterance of these in childlike confidence will awaken in us the slumbering consciousness that "*He shall cover us with his feathers, and under his wings shall we trust.*" (Ps. xci. 4.)

In this state of feeling, when the greatness of our Lord, and His infinite and fatherly love for each one of His children, is in some degree understood and appreciated, we shall be inclined, not only to pronounce with our lips the words, "*hallowed be thy name,*" but the desire of our hearts will be, that in all our life His name may *be hallowed*, both for ourselves and for others.

A man's name is that by which he is known to others ; and whatever we may know of his character is always brought to our thought by his name. The name of a bad man brings at once to our thought some of his bad deeds, while the name of a good man recalls his goodness to us or to others. The name of the Lord is His manifestation of Himself to man, in whatever way it may be, by His works or by His Word, or, in a higher sense, by His Humanity, in which He came to the world as Jesus Christ ; and that we may come to a better understanding of *His name*, what it is, and how it should be hallowed, we need to pray continually, "*Thy kingdom come ; thy will be done, as in heaven,*

so also upon earth." The truest way of hallowing His name is in the effort to make room in our hearts where the kingdom of His truth may come; and this can only be accomplished by constant vigilance on our part, lest thoughts and desires of evil gain admittance, — remembering that where evil is good cannot dwell.

As we receive power to do this our part in the work of regeneration, the Lord's will may be done in the earth of our lives as it is in the heavens. Our external life may then correspond with the internal life of the spirit, instead of being at variance with it, as it often is now when we try to conceal from others our true thoughts and feelings.

Our daily bread, for which we are taught to ask, includes, besides the food necessary for the maintenance of physical life, all the spiritual food which forms the daily and constant sustenance of our spiritual life; everything good and true which we willingly and intelligently receive forms a part of our spiritual "daily bread"; and as food which sustains the body must be received, digested, and assimilated, that it may become a part of the body, increasing its powers, the food of the spirit must likewise be received by the understanding and made intelligible to us, welcomed by the will with an affection and desire for it, and used in our life as a part of it. Of this bread our Lord says, "*I am the bread of*

life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John vi. 35.) And again, "*Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.*" (John vi. 27.)

If, mindful of all these things expressed by the words, we pray "*Give us this day our daily bread,*" they will be for us the best expression of all our desires for good things, both for ourselves and for others; for the prayer including *all* impresses upon us the knowledge that our Lord would have us offer our petitions to Him with a spirit of charity and love for all. "*Give us,*" we pray; not, Give to me alone.

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors!"

When we feel the debts of gratitude which we owe to our Father in heaven for all the things that we enjoy, reverently acknowledging that He gives them all, even our life and being, we shall want to pray "*forgive us our debts,*" because we can never pay them; but we may strive to remember, in all our connection with others, that the latter part of the petition is made the condition of our forgiveness, "*as we forgive our debtors.*"

When we feel ourselves wronged by word or deed of others, the first feeling that comes to us is generally one of indignation, and, although often

denominated *sensitiveness*, even a slight examination will reveal to us the selfishness concealed within it; some part of our individuality is trespassed upon, and we are hurt and offended by it.

Forgetfulness of self and thought for others, will banish all this indignation, leaving in its place only sorrow for the blindness of the offender to his own spiritual interest, or perhaps the humiliating revelation that the offence was more imaginary on our part than real. We may say with our lips that our debtors are forgiven; but, while this feeling of indignation is allowed to remain within, our forgiveness cannot be real.

There is no indignation in the forgiveness of our Lord for His erring children. Many are the ways in which we may learn how truly He "*is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy*"; for "*He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities*" (Ps. ciii. 10), and His commandment is, "*Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.*" (Luke vi. 37.)

The words of the petition, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," cannot truly express the desire of the heart while thoughts and feelings of anger towards those who do us wrong find an entrance and an abiding-place there. In earnestly striving to put away all such thoughts and feelings, very different emotions may be received in

their places, and we may in this way come to the acknowledgment that

“E’en to those who do us wrong
Does thankfulness in truth belong:
They teach us to forgive.”

While we cherish in our hearts any feelings except of forgiveness and love for those who do us injury, we cannot be in a suitable condition ourselves to receive forgiveness from the Lord for our own errors. In the one hundred and ninth Psalm are the words, “*Since he loveth cursing, let it come upon him; since he delighteth not in blessing, let it be far from him.*” A thoughtful consideration of their meaning will disclose to every earnest seeker for truth, within the apparently vindictive sense of the literal words, a desire in accordance with the petition, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”; for, until we learn to practise forgiveness towards others, we cannot know what the forgiveness of our Heavenly Father is, although it is freely offered to all.

“*Lead us not into temptation.*”

Following the leading of our own natural inclinations, heeding not the voice that calls, “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me,*” (Matt. xvi. 24,) we go astray; and often do we acknowledge the error of our way only when our own feet have led us into

snare and pitfalls of misfortune, and our way is hedged about by circumstances beyond our control. Then, other help failing, our own weakness is discovered to us, and we pray to the Lord, "*Lead us*"; feeling that of ourselves we can do nothing, that all our power to "live and move and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28) is from Him alone. This state of feeling should be ours continually, and as our life is regenerated we shall be able to make it ours more constantly; and, knowing our utter inability to resist and put away evil by our own strength, the remaining words of the petition will be the best expression of our hearts' desire, "*Lead us not into temptation.*"

When anything is presented to our consideration which we know to be wrong, and yet desire to do, we call it a temptation. The temptation, however, is not the thing itself, but our desire to do it; for the thing itself can be no temptation to us if it awaken in us no desire for it. This is, therefore, what we have to contend with,—the love and desire for evil within our own souls, which draws to it evil from without, making it a temptation,—and this is the evil from which we should pray to be delivered.

The accomplishment of this desire can be attained only by our own earnest co-operation with the Lord in the work of reformation, — "*ceasing to do evil,*"

that we may "*learn to do well.*" (Isa. i. 16.) The Lord indeed "worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. ii. 13); but we ourselves are the instruments with which He works, and we should yield willing obedience, acknowledging that all the will and the power to do come to us from Him alone. Then will our humble, though fervent, glorification of Him find no better words than these: "*For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever.*"

And for each petition our full assent and desire that it may be fulfilled shall be an "*amen.*"

We have need to learn to make the spirit of this prayer ours in deed as well as in word. We do not pray, "*Give us this day our daily bread,*" expecting it to come to us without effort; but by laboring for it, and attending to its proper preparation, we make the prayer ours in deed, and God helps us to do it for our physical preservation. But neither is it possible for us to receive our spiritual bread unless we make an effort to obtain it by going to the Bible, — that inexhaustible store-house where it may always be found, — and labor for it by striving to keep ourselves in a condition to receive it gladly, whenever and however it may come to us.

Our Lord Jesus says to each one: "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock,*

and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." (Luke xi. 9, 10.)

Three things are given us to do, to *ask*, to *seek*, and to *knock*, requiring three distinct modes of action, and each action must come from a distinct motive within. In order to ask, it is necessary to know what we would ask for, and this belongs to the understanding; that we may seek, there must be some desire for the thing sought, and this belongs to the affection or will, which is a more interior faculty than the understanding; while to knock requires the exercise of both will and understanding. Thus are we admonished to use all the faculties given to us, making our life a continual prayer for more and better perceptions of the good and the true.

It is true that our Father knows all our needs before we ask Him. But He gives to us only as we ask, that we may receive willingly and in freedom what He gives. The boundless wealth of His love going forth for all His creatures would overwhelm us if received in any other way. He withholds nothing from those who desire and ask in a true way that they may become the children of God.

THE PSALMS.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." —
PSALM cxix. 105.

NO intelligent reader of the Bible can fail to notice a special peculiarity in the Psalms, distinguishing them from all other parts of the Bible. They seem set apart by themselves, belonging entirely neither to the historical, the prophetic, nor the evangelical parts of the Word, although portions of them seem to resemble each.

The most critical examination of the literal words can afford no satisfactory evidences why this is so, and many satisfy themselves with the explanation that the different parts of the Bible were written at different periods of time, each receiving the peculiar style of the time and the writer. But the times and customs of men are the effects of spiritual causes, not the causes themselves; and if the Bible is the WORD OF GOD, something beyond the mere variation in the conditions of men, in this world, must be a cause for its variety of style and forms of expression.

We may become convinced of this; and yet, so long as we seek for it in the literal words only, we

must be disappointed. This is like searching for the causes of individual life in the dissection and examination of dead bodies ; for although their marvellous and delicate organism may excite our wonder and admiration, they can be to us nothing more than dead bodies, unless the breath of God inspires them with life. *Then* will the living soul be seen in and through the covering of the body.

The living soul of God's Divine Love and Wisdom is within His Word, giving its life for "*the light of the world*"; but we, in our blindness to spiritual things, do not perceive it ; or if, perchance, we do, it is but dimly seen ; and when we sometimes feel the warm pulses of its great heart-throbs, we know not what it is.

Every sentence, every word, even every letter, of this wonderfully inspired book, is a part of the external covering of Divine Goodness and Truth, and thus its manifestation to men ; as every part of the human body is a covering, and also a manifestation of the spirit within. The Lord God is the soul of it, for He says : "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (John i. 1) ; and whenever we read it with a devout and reverent spirit we come near to the Lord Himself.

When we can thus acknowledge and perceive God Himself to be within His Word, we can more

readily understand how it is that in its most interior sense it relates to Him alone, and how the Psalms especially describe every state through which He passed while regenerating and glorifying the Humanity which He took for Himself in this world, and thus made divine. Every regenerating soul must, in a finite way, pass through the same or similar conditions spiritually, for so we "follow" Him; and in each successive state of an orderly regeneration may its true exponent be found *here*, from the first acknowledgment that the ways of truth and goodness are better than the ways of error and evil, declared to our thought by the words of the first Psalm: "*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, and standeth not in the way of sinners, and sitteth not in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night,*" to the glorification of our Lord by the consecration to His service of every faculty that He has given us, and by the sacred dedication to Him of every function of our life; when our heartfelt expression shall be, "*Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.*" (Ps. cl. 6.)

In order, however, to come fully into this state, it is necessary to pass through all the intermediate states truly described in the spiritual sense of the

Psalms, which follow each other in their true order.

We may be able to perceive this more clearly by directing our attention to the first and second Psalms, where different states of mind are very plainly indicated. All the words of the first Psalm are expressive of a state which must always be *first* as the commencement of regeneration for each soul,—a state in which a true perception of the good and the evil in relation to each other, and in relation to the Lord, is clearly manifested to our thought. The reading of them, in a spirit of sincerity and humility, is always accompanied by a peaceful feeling of assurance and confidence that this is the truth; while immediately following, in the first verses of the second Psalm, are expressed the doubts and questionings which always arise in every regenerating soul when the prevalence and power of evil make themselves felt. Nevertheless, amid the distracting influences of such doubts and fears, the trusting soul may ever turn to the Lord, as a magnet to its pole, believing that His Divine Providence encircles and controls everything; and although many shall wonder, and say, “*Who will show us any good?*” (Ps. iv. 6,) yet all these shall experience how “*blessed are all they that put their trust in him.*” (Ps. ii. 12.)

When we consider that many years are often

passed in the all-engrossing life of this outside world before arriving at the acknowledgment even of the superiority of goodness and truth taught in the first Psalm, something of the infinity of the Divine Truth which, in the Psalms, expresses the various spiritual states and conditions of *all* men may dawn upon us, although its infinitude may never be completely grasped by finite comprehension.

Our various states of feeling are expressed to our own consciousness by our thoughts; and to others they are manifested by words and actions, as may be readily seen by a little careful attention; for when we are annoyed or troubled in any way, the impatient feeling often manifests itself in words of fretfulness, or by unkind actions; while joy and happiness within generally cause our words and deeds to carry happiness to others.

When our Lord assumed Humanity, and lived in this world as a man, His ways of manifesting Himself to others were similar to those of other men, while His omnipotent Divinity made each manifestation a perpetual token to all of His continual omnipresence. Thus are the Psalms an expression of His thoughts, in each and every condition through which He passed while glorifying and making divine His human nature.

We may find ourselves perplexed by the ques-

tion: If these things are really so, how could the Psalms have been given to men so long before (as we have been taught to believe) the Lord himself came into the world? But we must endeavor, in our thought of these things, to put aside all idea of time, as that belongs only to this world, remembering that the works of our Lord are not limited by time and space as ours are, for He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." (Heb. xiii. 8.) He works in and through the spiritual world, and the effects of His works are felt and seen in this natural world. Here they may be limited by time; but, in their beginning, they are not. The Psalms may therefore refer entirely to the life of our Lord in their spiritual sense, and yet have been given to man before He came Himself.

The Psalms were written by David, because, as a representative character, he represented the Lord who was to come into the world; and as the King of Israel, leading the "children of Israel" through their many wars with other nations, he exhibited, in external forms, a representation of the life of the Lord in this world, and His conflicts with all evil, that *all* who may spiritually come into the inheritance of the children of Israel may be delivered from the dominion of the powers of evil by following and obeying their Divine Leader. Psalms, or songs, are expressions of various states of feeling;

and the Psalms of David express, by their title, what they really are, — a manifestation, in words intelligible to all, of the *thoughts of our Lord*, in His human nature, while He was performing the work of making it divine.

We may notice, in the progress of regeneration, that there are times in which some particular psalm seems to give us more satisfaction than any other; and very often the repetition of its words will bring to us a feeling of security and peace, even in the midst of outward perplexity, while, at other times, the same words may be less effectual, and those of some other psalm more so. The reason of this may become evident, as we come to perceive and to acknowledge that there is certainly a connected spiritual sense within the literal words of the Bible, as the soul within the body. Swedenborg says, “All and every part of the literal sense of the Word has communication with, and opens heaven”; and, in another place, “The reason that man has consociation with angels by the natural or literal sense of the Word, is likewise because in every man from creation there are three degrees of life, — the celestial, the spiritual, and the natural; man, however, is in the natural degree, so long as he continues in this world, and, at the same time, so far in the spiritual degree as he is principled in genuine truths, and so far in a celestial degree as he is principled in a life according to those truths.”

“When man reads the Word, and perceives it according to the sense of the letter, or the external sense, the angels perceive it according to the internal or spiritual sense; for all the thought of the angels is spiritual, whereas the thought of man is natural. Those thoughts, indeed, appear diverse; but still they are one, because they correspond.”

Since this is so, we may become able to perceive, that, when we read or repeat any part of the Word of God with a devout spirit, believing it to be holy, we come into closer connection with the angels, who understand its spiritual meaning; and for this reason we may also know, that, when a particular passage gives us a special feeling of delight, it is because we are then in a condition to receive something of the spiritual sense perceived by the angels, who can then draw nearer to us, while these words are in our thoughts. It is also because we are, at that time, in a suitable condition to receive help from them.

Let us, then, ever approach God's Word reverently, striving to keep its precepts in our thought, that it may be, in all our life, “*a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.*” (Ps. cxix. 105.)

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD WITH MEN.

“Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle *that* shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

“But there the glorious Lord *will be* unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

“For the Lord *is* our judge, the Lord *is* our lawgiver, the Lord *is* our king; he will save us.” — ISAIAH xxxiii. 20–22.

WE read in the Bible, in the Book of Exodus, that, while the children of Israel journeyed in the wilderness, long before they came to the land of Canaan, “*The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering; of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. . . . And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it*” (Ex. xxv. 1–9); and many things afterwards mentioned are variously described in detail as to their construction, arrangement, and use in the tabernacle, and for the worship of the Almighty Lord to be performed there.

Of what use or assistance can these things be to us, living an entirely different life, and surrounded by totally different circumstances? How can the knowledge of such things be of any service in the contests of our life? and why should they form a portion of the Word of God?

Regarded from a merely natural point of view, they can in no way assist us, either in the external life of this world, nor for the heavenly life which is the way to heaven itself.

We may not obey literally all the commands and statutes given to the Israelites of old; we may not erect a tabernacle with its hangings of "*blue, purple, and scarlet,*" with its inner place for holy things, and its outer court and appointments; but we may learn that the Word of God is given for *all* men, in *all* ages of time, when we can perceive and acknowledge the truth, that the literal words of this wonderful book are only the covering of a spiritual sense, connected and entire throughout; that they are the body of which God's Divine Truth itself is the soul.

In order to understand this more fully, we need to learn how all things of this material world correspond with the things of the spiritual world which is above and within: and although I am aware that what I am about to say in explanation of this is but a repetition of what has already been said, yet

the importance of the subject seems to permit it. All things exist here because of something prior and superior to them, of which they are severally the material effect or covering. This may be illustrated by those objects which are called "the works of nature." When the sweet flowers and the fresh green grass arise from the cold, dark earth, with a beauty ever new in the spring-time, and the tender leaves cover all the bare brown branches with robes of verdant beauty, there are, happily, few who dare to assert that the power of being lies in the things themselves. There is a general acknowledgment among those who have any appreciation of the bright loveliness and quiet order pervading all, that "God makes them"; but we need to learn, by many lessons, that God Himself is in *all* His works, and that all material forms come from, and are adapted to, the spiritual cause which they represent.

All the things which supply the physical necessities of man — houses, clothing, and food — may be said to proceed from the thought of his spirit, by the labor of his hands; and thus are his wants and desires made manifest and represented by the material things with which he surrounds himself.

The Word of God is written according to this divine law of correspondence, and all the words and sentences which compose it have been selected

and arranged, not by the wisdom of man, but by the infinite wisdom of God, with reference to the Divine Truth which can thus be brought down, as in an earthen vessel, to the comprehension of men. The mention of any natural object in the Word of God represents the spiritual principle to which it corresponds; and a knowledge and use of *this* may be of great assistance to us in our spiritual life, although the thing itself, regarded in its literal meaning alone, might appear utterly useless. Some knowledge of this correspondence of material things with spiritual things comes to those who are ready to receive it; but we can never expect to grasp all its wonders in our finite understandings. A very slight perception of it is sufficient to fill the inquiring soul with awe, with trembling homage and adoration for the glorious Being who, thus descending, adapts Himself to the feeble comprehension of His erring creatures.

The Sun is a familiar illustration of correspondence. It is the source of life-giving influences to all natural things; through it the Lord acts upon the material world; and when we read in His Word, "*Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended,*" (Is. lx. 20,) our thought is at once lifted to the Lord Himself,—the "Sun of

Righteousness"; and we can easily understand how the most glorious object in the material universe, and the one most powerful in life-giving effects, represents to us the mighty Lord Himself, the Creator and Preserver of all things, the Sun of the spiritual world, "*For the Lord God is a sun and shield.*" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11.)

The body through which, and by means of which, man lives and acts in this world, through which his life is manifested, is often compared to a house; and this comparison is not arbitrary when we can perceive that the houses we live in correspond with the wants and necessities of our life. The house of the poor man, supplying only the absolute necessities of life, and the palatial dwellings of the rich, arranged for the enjoyment of social and intellectual delights, as well as for all physical necessities, with all the endless varieties coming between, are a true representation of the houses "not made with hands" which all are constructing by the daily labor of life, and these shall be our eternal homes in another world. Just as we build them day by day *here*, so shall they remain our dwelling-places forever. Of these the apostle Paul speaks when he says, "For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Cor. v. 1.)

This subject, of the correspondence of natural things with spiritual, is so vast that it can with difficulty be explained in a few words ; but let us see how what has already been said can help us to understand more clearly the command of God, that His tabernacle should be with men. (Ezek. xxxvii. 27.)

The internal and external parts of man's nature are, like two beings, distinct, and yet united in the life of each one. The external faculties, those especially adapted for our use in this external world, are exercised continually in the common labors of daily life, while the internal faculties are closed ; but the morning and evening prayer, the reading of God's Word, and worshipping in His house on the Sabbaths, bring us to the use of other faculties, within and above those necessary for common life ; and thus may we understand the words of Jesus, "*But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.*" (Matt. vi. 7.) The closet of our own heart, the secret place of our most interior spiritual life, is where we must enter in, that we may pray to our Father in secret ; and in this sanctuary there is no need of the exterior faculties which serve our life in this world. The door must be shut upon all thoughts and desires

belonging to them ; and with constant watchfulness must we keep it closed, while we hold communion with our Lord.

Here is the tabernacle, or dwelling, of God with man. Let us order all its arrangements according to His divine law, as it may become clearly manifested to our understandings.

The children of Israel were admonished to bring various materials for the construction of the tabernacle. “ *Whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord, gold and silver and brass,*” (Ex. xxxv. 5,) and many other things, each corresponding to some of those good principles which we should strive to obtain and use for the development of our inner life, that the tabernacle for our God may be erected within us, — an humble temple, yet fit for the presence of the Great King.

One of the most important things seems to be, that “ *every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord.*” (Ex. xxxv. 22.) Gold, as it is the most precious and the most highly prized material thing, is the true representative of Love, the all-important thing essential for our spiritual life. Our love for God is only His love for us reflected back to Him ; and although much alloyed by selfish loves, the *pure gold* is what we are enjoined to bring, and with this the ark, the table, and the incense-altar are to be overlaid ; and many of the

vessels, and also the mercy-seat and candlestick, are to be made of it entirely. The love of the Lord for the sake of His own Goodness, and for the purity of His Truth which He reveals, is to be the principal thing in *our* tabernacle.

“*All the work of the tabernacle,*” (Ex. xxxix. 32,) all things necessary for its construction and use, were to be made by the people, and brought to Moses, who is described as putting them all together, and thus finishing, without assistance, the tabernacle, as God commanded. Moses, the man of God, is an external representative of the Divine Truth, which comes from the Lord. This is in His Word. This is our leader from the Land of Egypt, in which we spiritually languish, to the Land of Canaan, — that blessed state in which we shall love to do our Lord’s will better than our own.

To this divinely appointed leader, the Truth of God as we each receive it into our hearts, we must bring all our thoughts and feelings, and the forms of belief shaped from them; and with these shall our tabernacle be raised. And it shall be in two parts, — the Holy Place within, where the ark and the mercy-seat, covered with the veil, represent the most interior principles of our will, or the love of our life, by means of which, when sanctified to God’s service, we may come into His presence by the secret communion which is granted to all who

truly seek ; and that court, where the table for the shew-bread, and the golden candlestick, whose lamps were lighted before the Lord, (Ex. xl. 25,) represent the goods and truths received from the Lord, and used intellectually in the more exterior parts of our life.

In the arrangement of the tabernacle, Moses was commanded by the Lord first to “*put therein the ark of the testimony, and cover the ark with the veil.*” (Ex. xl. 3.) Afterwards to bring in the table, the candlestick, the altars for incense and for offering, and lastly to set the laver and the court, with the hanging at the court-gate. May we not learn something for our spiritual life from these things? The ark was the receptacle of the testimony, God’s commandments to men, and may therefore represent that part of the life in man in which are enshrined the commands of the Lord to all who follow Him. This is all-important, and should always receive our first attention in the arrangement of our inner life ; for according to our understanding of God’s law, and our desire to obey it, will our lives be affected by it.

Every man, whether it is known to him or not, has within himself a spiritual ark, containing the laws which are received as the rule of his life. The ark is man’s love for these laws, whatever they may be, surrounding them as something sacred to

be protected from foreign intrusion, and concealed from a gaze too inquisitive ; and if this be the “ *Ark of the Testimony*,” it shall be well, and the sincere love of God’s laws as they are revealed to us shall help us constantly to a better understanding of their requirements. But if it be only an affection by which we cling to our own selfish interpretations of God’s laws, trying to make them fit our own grovelling desires, evil influences will lead us astray until good shall seem to us as evil, and evil as good, truth as falsehood, and falsehood as truth, and our ark cannot make a part of the tabernacle of God.

The table and the candlestick represent respectively all the goodness and truth that we receive from the Lord, and appropriate to our own life ; and these should be placed near the ark with the altars, where we may continually present the incense and offerings of humble and sincere acknowledgment, that *all* goodness and truth comes to us from the Lord.

The laver was one of the last things to be set in its place, and there those who came into the tabernacle washed. Washing, in its literal sense, has reference to the cleansing of the body, and may thus represent the spiritual cleansing of the more exterior parts of the soul. Jesus said, “ *He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is*

clean every whit," (John xiii. 10,) very evidently referring to a spiritual, and not a physical cleansing. But the more interior faculties must be purified and set in order before those more exterior can be *really* renewed in the right way: "*Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also,*" (Matt. xxiii. 26,) are the words of Jesus. The ark, the table, the candlestick, and the two altars, must be set in their places first, before the laver; but when the laver *is* set up, it must be filled with water, the symbol of God's truth, by the application of which we may be purified in all our outward life.

Moses and Aaron, and all who came into the tabernacle to perform any service, were commanded to wash their hands and their feet at the laver before entering. Moses and Aaron represent the truth and goodness which come from the Lord to man. Moses represents Truth, for by him was given the law; and Aaron, in his office of priest, represents Good. By these alone, as received by man, may he approach to the altar of God within the tabernacle to offer the *sacrifices* of an understanding renewed by the reception of divine truth and the *burnt-offerings* of a will regenerated by divine goodness. Bringing everything *first* to the cleansing test of those truths which relate to our life here (God's commandments and the precepts of the New Testa-

ment are such), and afterwards to things more interior, the work of building the tabernacle is finished.

“Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. For the cloud of the Lord was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.” (Ex: xl. 34, 38.)

When our tabernacle is finished, by the regeneration of all our faculties, and their consecration to the service of God, then will our Lord himself come down to dwell in it, and we may say with John, *“I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God”* (Rev. xxi. 3); and His truth, clothed in natural ideas and words suited to our finite comprehension, shall be the cloud by day; and in times of doubt and distress, which are our spiritual nights, His fatherly love for all his children shall ever cause His truth to shine even as a *pillar of fire*, that we may not lose the way in the darkness.

Though our wanderings through the wilderness be long and wearisome, this tabernacle shall be our place of refuge, where we may enter and be safe from the annoyances of our external life, abiding

in holy communion with our FATHER there; and when, like the children of Israel, the place of our abode is changed, and we come spiritually into some new condition of life, let us not forget that the tabernacle should have the first place, and the *pillar of cloud* should lead us in all our journeyings.

RIGHT AND WRONG.

“Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fulness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures forevermore.” — PSALM xvi. 11.

THERE is probably no person living, unless utterly and irremediably imbecile, who is entirely destitute of some interior sense of right and wrong. That certain things may be done, and that certain other things may not be done, is known; and those things which may be done are called *right*, while those which may not be done are called *wrong*. This sense, however, in many, perhaps in most cases, is weak, its keenness blunted, and its whole power degenerated from its original purity and strength. False education, evil tendencies inherited from past generations, and, more than all, a perverse love and choice of evil, are the causes of this degeneracy.

Sincere love for God, our Heavenly Father, and desires to do the *right* in all our connection with others, do not always insure to us a perfect knowledge of what *is* right and what *is* wrong. Even the most righteous man may err in judgment. But this is always and only when, trusting in his own strength, he forgets the Lord his God.

What is already known of evil influences may help us to see how, through the evil in our own natures, a wrong course of action may assume the appearance of right, while the right may seem just the opposite. For this reason, intuitive perceptions may not always be accepted or trusted as a sure guide. But the good implanted in every soul, even though faintly responsive to good influences, under the name of conscience, turns, at least, our thought before we go astray ; and then, in doubt, we cannot at once decide which of two ways is right. Our inclinations draw us one way, conscience another. But what is conscience ?

The word itself is derived from the Latin verb *conscire*, to know, to be conscious of ; and its most obvious meaning is, to have a knowledge of one's own actions. It is very generally used to express moral rectitude ; and it is said of a person who allows his actions to be influenced by an interior sense of right and wrong, that he is conscientious. But the conscience of one may allow a certain course of action which the conscience of another would condemn ; and so we may see, that, for each man, a conscience is formed by the truth which, in various ways, has been implanted in his inmost life. In childhood, influences from within are purer and better than in later life, because there is less opposition ; and “ *in heaven their angels do*

always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 10) are the words of our Lord Jesus. Surely the good influences of such angelic presences must leave impressions in the inmost life of every child, as also outward teachings leave them, never, in this world, to be effaced, although long covered and concealed by the dusty conflict of after years. By the goodness and truth stored up through such means in the inmost of each life, under the name of conscience, are all actions brought to judgment.

Now, all this has very much to do with our ideas of right and wrong; for, when the surroundings and life are favorable to the reception of these heavenly influences in childhood, very many things may be seen to be wrong in after life, which might be passed without condemnation by a conscience formed under less favorable circumstances.

But, however this may be, times of doubt must come to all,—times when help is desired and needed. Where should we expect to find surer help than in God's Word, given for our guidance? And yet we may sometimes fail to discover in its sacred teachings the help needed for special occasions, not because it is not there, but because our mental sight, narrowed to the vision of external things only, is unable to behold the spiritual *through* the natural. We take the literal words,

beholding nothing beyond ; while God, with the tenderest forbearance for our human frailties, is revealing to all who will receive it the spiritual truth within, as a soul in the body.

We read, in the seventeenth chapter of Deuteronomy, "*If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates, then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose.*"

This command was given to the children of Israel a long, long time ago ; but forming, as it does, a part of God's Word to man, it may even now bring help to the inquiring soul in its daily questionings.

Judgment is a decision between right and wrong. That a judgment may be true, it is necessary that it should be strictly in accordance with Truth. "A righteous judge" is one who judges fairly, according to the truth that he receives ; and, when we become judges in matters of private decision, we should strive to make our judgment true by allowing it to be made according to what we receive as truth. For example, we may be desirous to help others to come to what seems to us a better way of living and thinking ; but the best way to accomplish this may not at first be plain to us ; we hesi-

tate, not knowing how to commence our work. Some decision must, however, be made ; and there is a rule which may always assist us, in reaching a decision which shall be right, — the rule given by our Lord Jesus, — “ *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*” Whenever we allow our judgment to be guided by this, it will be *true*.

But there are times when we are in doubt. Matters arise that are too hard for us ; that is, certain questions have to be decided in our own minds for which the external forms of truth that we have been using prove insufficient. Then are we also told to arise “ *and get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose.*”

The external surroundings of life often tend to keep us in this state of doubt ; but when we are willing to do our own part of the work commanded, when we arise from these external conditions, steadfastly turning our thoughts within and above to the Holy Place of God’s truth as it is revealed to us, fresh tokens of His presence and love shall give us assurance, and we shall be ready to obey the remaining portion of the command.

“ *And thou shalt come unto the priests, the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire ; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgment.*”

The priests and the judge, it is said, shall show us the sentence of judgment, if we do our part of the work by going to them. Priests, we know, are the ministers of God, performing the services of the church on earth, appointed leaders of the people in the heavenly way; and when this service is performed with sincere love and self-devotion, it becomes an earthly representative of that Divine Love which is forever leading all to the highest happiness which they can willingly receive.

The righteous judge who judges according to the truth is also a representative of that Divine Truth which judges every man according to his work.

These two — God's Love and Truth, as they are received into the most interior part of the soul — are the priest and the judge who shall show us "*the sentence of judgment.*" An appeal to the highest principles of goodness and truth within our own souls will always bring us to the best decision of which we are then capable.

By this decision we are commanded to abide. "*And thou shalt do according to the sentence which they of that place which the Lord shall choose shall show thee.*"

This requirement, with some variations of expression, is given four times; and this fact has a significance for us, because all numbers used in the Bible are significant of things belonging to our spiritual

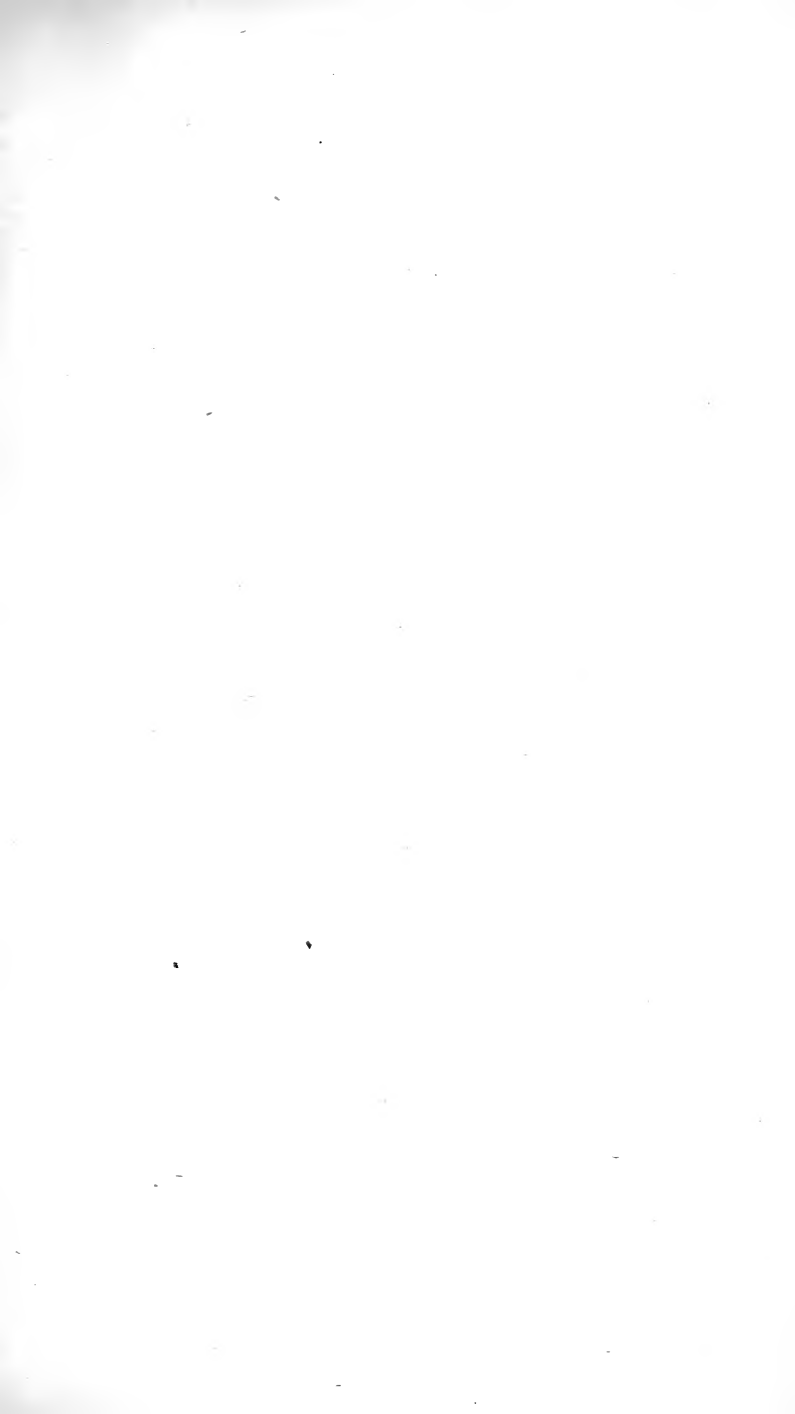
life. All things in this material world, as has often been said before, represent things belonging to the spiritual world which is above or within all; and all may be separated, in a general way, into two great classes,—all of one class referring to and symbolizing goodness, and all of the other class referring to and symbolizing truth. Numbers also come under this general law; odd numbers having reference to the symbolism of truth, and even numbers to the symbolism of goodness. Four, being an even number, has some reference to goodness; and the repetition four times of the requirement alluded to has something to teach of the good which will always result from obedience to it.

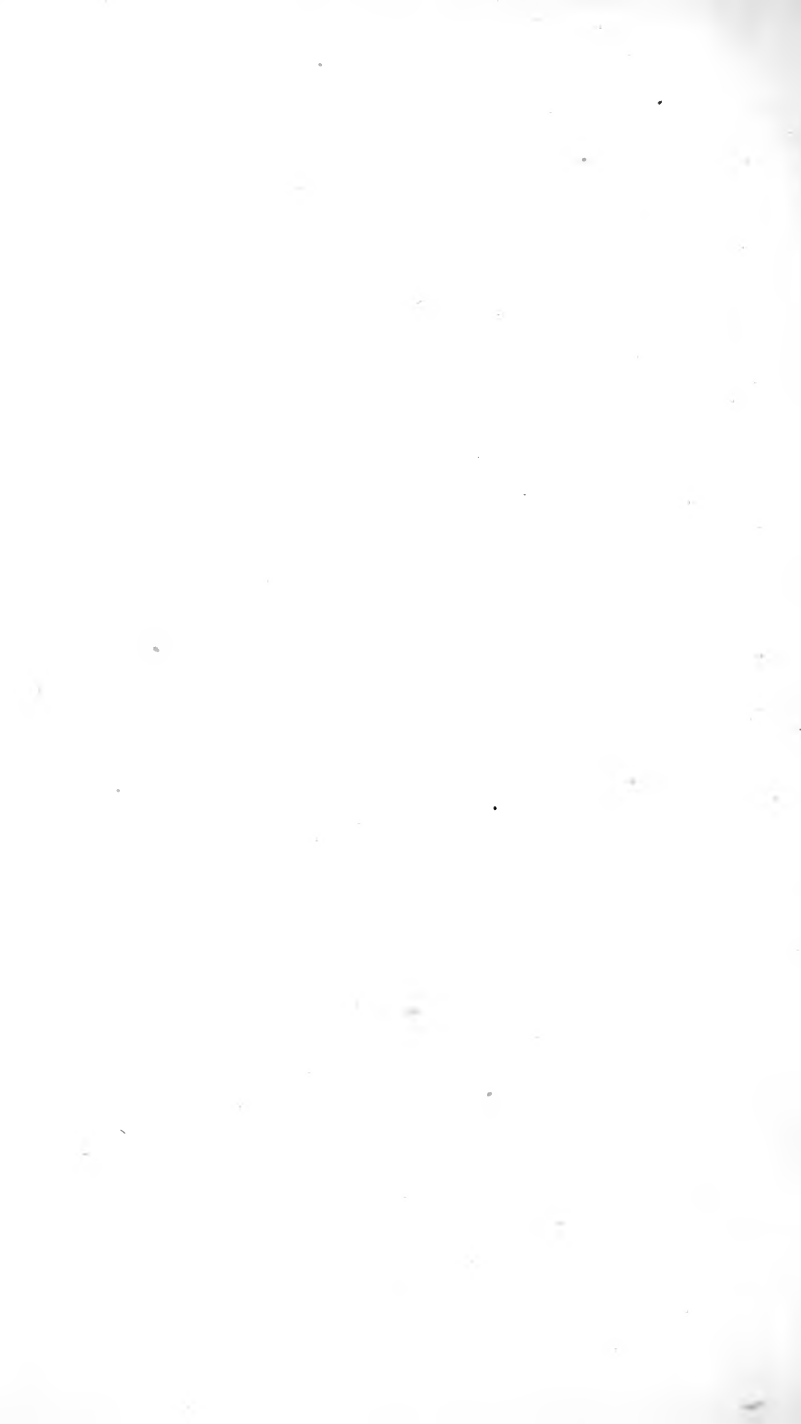
“And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die; and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.”

It is said that the man who will not hearken shall die. Every one who will not heed the voice within, who will not hearken to the priest and the judge in the inner sanctuary of the soul,—the place that the Lord hath chosen,—who chooses to follow the promptings of his own evil desires, must eventually lose all that part of his spiritual life which would enable him to attain to the highest happiness by accepting in his life goodness and

truth from the Lord ; thus will he die, most surely, to all true happiness and to all real life.

It is true that our Heavenly Father compels none to accept the good things which He offers them, forces none to obey His commandments, even though nothing is more certain than that this obedience would insure for all the highest happiness. Freedom is given to man, that he may be responsible for his life, and not merely a piece of human machinery, as he would be without it. The reception of God's love and truth makes man the willing, yea, the joyful, servant of "the King of kings," while its rejection condemns him to his own destruction. But, whatever be our choice, forever are "*his tender mercies over all his works,*" and forever shall the blessed words be repeated to every listening ear, "*If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*" (John xiii. 17.)





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